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La. 'Betrayed' By Leadership, Chandler Says

Formally announcing his candidacy for governor, Life magazine writer David L. Chandler has declared that Louisiana is a state "betrayed" by its leadership and pledged a program of reform based on constitutional revision.

"My ambitions in running for the office are mixed," Chandler said. "First, I want to give myself, and people like me, someone to vote for in the Nov. 6 election. Second, I want to find out more about people. What are their hopes and their frustrations? How many good people are there in Louisiana? And how many bad? And finally there is the conceit that I can turn this state around. That I can not only bring it into the 20th Century but put it on the threshold of the 21st."

Chandler said, "With the exception of a few Huey Longs, the Southerner has been consistently betrayed by his leadership since before the Civil War." He said the Southern white man "has less opportunity to develop his talents, earn a decent income, and develop the full resources of his humanity than his fellow citizen elsewhere in the United States."

The Louisiana constitution, he said, is "designed to protect leadership interests against the people."

In addition to revision of the constitution, Chandler aid he would work for ellmination of about 220 of the state's 263 public agencies, reform of the property tax system, removal of the offices of assessor and state superintendent of education from elective politics, greater revenue-ralsing authority for local governments, establishment of strong consumer and environmental protection agencies and reform of the prison and mental health facilities of the state.

"A transition to the 21st Century will be enormously difficult; and it may be impossible under existing conditions. But at least someone should try," Chandler concluded.

The writer as a candidate

David Chandler, the magazine writer turned gubernatorial candidate, has published his platform. It is noteworthy for its content, clarity, candor and humor. The last two qualities make it a refreshing departure from the dead public relationese of most such pronouncements.

Mr. Chandler, whose article in the April 10, 1970, issue of Life magazine sparked a legislative investigation of organized crime influence in state government, for example, sums up the need for constitutional revision this way:

"At the core of reform is constitutional revision. Our Louisiana Constitution is written by the leadership for the leadership.

"The bulk of the U.S. Constitution is designed to protect the citizen from the state. In Louisiana we have the reverse: a constitution designed to protect leadership interests against the people."

Mr. Chandler suggests the present constitution be replaced by a more concise statement of general principle.

Mr. Chandler's fundamentally anti-establishment stance on this subject flows from the view that the Southern white has been exploited by no one so much as his own leaders, who have skillfully employed the race issue to keep him in economic bondage.

Some of Mr. Chandler's observations are acute, others oversimplified. His heart is in the right place, however.

Mr. Chandler has set out to answer a question. The question is: Can a man with no money be elected governor? We think we know the answer already. But Mr. Chandler is a refreshing breeze and before it's all over he may make some of the other candidates wish he had never entered the race.